



## ILEA EQUITY BLOG SERIES – ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY

Over the past few months we have been dealing with the collective trauma caused by the coronavirus pandemic. What we knew to be our "normal" lives changed quickly and dramatically. This pandemic has also demonstrated how societal inequality based on income, race, and geography shapes the spread of Covid-19. The heinous death of George Floyd in Minneapolis has shone a light on another collective trauma in our nation - systemic racism and how it results in the denial of the most basic human dignity and life.

We have all reached out to our campus communities and recognized the emotional trauma that the deaths of unarmed black men, women and children evoke in people of color everywhere. Many of us, no matter our age, race, gender, or creed are grieving, and that grief may be manifesting itself in many ways, including physically, spiritually, and emotionally. So what does this have to do with our ILEA Equity Plans? Everything. We believe in the power of education, the power it has on individuals and whole communities. This is why our ILEA Equity Plans, and the work that each of us is doing on our campus and sharing as a collective, is so important right now.

At Roosevelt University, a school with an historic mission of access to higher education, COVID-19 and the move to remote learning have exacerbated existing gaps. During this national reckoning over racism and inequality, the issues of equity and inclusion in teaching and learning matter now more than ever. Our fall faculty conference will have focused attention on equity and inclusion in teaching and learning, which will assist faculty in developing strategic and creative ways to ensure student success currently being threatened by the COVID-19 crisis.

We are keenly aware of the fact that the remote learning experience is not the same for every student. As a result of national student data as well as specific surveys done at Roosevelt, we know that students of color and first generation students often face a technological divide that their peers do not. Gaps in access to the needed resources to be successful in a virtual environment exist by race, zip code, as well as socio-economic status. To combat these gaps, Roosevelt implemented a number of strategies to provide resources to those students who were most in need. This included working with our Institutional Advancement team to raise additional money for our student emergency fund, creating a loaner laptop program, compiling a list of free local and national technology support services, as well as providing cash disbursements for students who had additional technology gaps, such as internet access and webcams.

Like many other universities, we continue to wrestle with feelings of inadequacy knowing that no matter how much we do, there's always more that can be done to move us toward greater access and justice.

Sincerely,

Katrina Coakley, Associate Provost for Student Success  
Jamar Orr, Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students